

4.9 Aesthetics

SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

The project would have a significant effect on the environment if it would:

- Noticeably increase visual contrast and reduce the scenic quality rating, as seen from any high sensitivity foreground or middleground viewpoint;
- Block or disrupt existing views or reduce public opportunities to view scenic resources; or
- Cause visual resource conditions resulting that would conflict with policies and regulations governing aesthetics.

A direct visual impact would be the disruption of a scenic view attributable to a proposed project. An example of this would be the construction of a new four-story office building in a mixed-use residential/commercial area such that the new building would block panoramic views of scenic resources from existing residences and/or introduce new light sources. Cumulative effects can result from individually minor but collectively significant actions taking place over time.

METHODOLOGY

The aesthetics analysis in this section is based upon current scenic conditions from the project area roadways, as well as from any potential vantage points in the project area. Project construction would take place both north and south of State Route 299. In addition, a directional bore for the 3-inch discharge pipeline would be constructed beneath SR 299 at Post Mile 22.30. Other county roads adjacent to the construction of the food service/laundry building and mechanical building are County Road 161 and County Road 203 respectively.

IMPACT OVERVIEW

The proposed action would not have a permanent, adverse effect on scenic or visual resources in the vicinity. The proposed action would be of short duration with no tall structures or equipment used during construction. The project elements that would be visible after construction include one small new building and one larger building within the interior of the I'SOT property, surrounded by existing buildings.

EFFECTS OF PROPOSED ACTION – ALTERNATIVE A

Long Range Views

The Region of Influence (ROI) can generally be limited to five miles, beyond which distance features lose defining details. The construction activities would be visible from a distance, but not prominent due to the small crews that would work on the project.

The proposed pipeline would be buried and not visible after construction activities. The proposed buildings would be adjacent to several existing buildings. The views from a long-range distance would not be substantially affected, as it may be difficult to distinguish the new buildings.

Short Range Views

Motorist traffic and pedestrians traveling along the county roads and Highway 299 would view construction within the project area during the approximately four-week construction period. The activities would occur in the early spring when tourist traffic is less than during the summer. Construction of the discharge pipeline would be adjacent to County Road 54 within I'SOT-owned dry grazing land and up to 1,500 ft away from the road. See the photo in Figure 3.9-1 for the view from County Road 54 to the pipeline construction area. Construction activities would be performed between 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. during daylight hours so that no additional lighting would be required. Disturbed areas would be revegetated with plants similar to those in adjacent areas. Construction activities would be of limited duration so that effects to visual resources would be less than significant.

The mechanical building and the food service/laundry building would be designed using construction materials and colors that blend with the natural surroundings to minimize the visual contrast with the surrounding landscape. Lighting would be designed to keep glare at a minimum. The project would not result in a new source of substantial light or glare that would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area. The project operational elements would not be visible from Highway 299. The project would not conflict with the Visual Resource Quality objectives in the USDA Guidelines or the policies Modoc County General Plan. The effects of the proposed project on aesthetics would be less than significant.

MITIGATION MEASURES

No mitigation is required.

EFFECTS OF NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE

If the project were not constructed due to lack of DOE funding, there would be no adverse effects on aesthetics from Alternative B, the "No Action" alternative; however, the project could proceed without DOE funding contingent upon alternative funding, with effects from Alternative A potentially worse without DOE participation because no mitigation would be required (except NPDES required items). Without funding by DOE, I'SOT would not be reimbursed for costs resulting from permitting efforts, engineering consultation, and system installation costs. No data gathering system would be installed for DOE research and development (R&D) purposes.